

CHANGI JAIL – SINGAPORE – 1955.

Changi Jail is the transit camp for stations to the North,
Kuala Lumpur, Fraser's Hill and distant Butterworth.
The walls are all pock marked, from mortar and from shell,
This ugly concrete building that's halfway down to Hell.

Outside the balcony stands a tall and slender tree,
From my bed, through the opening, fresh coconuts I see.
They are very large and green and obviously full grown,
I hope the afternoon thunder storm will bring them tumbling down.

I am free and will not stay in this bleak and gloomy place.
Not like the previous inmates, cut off from the human race.
They were beaten, starved and shot, for no reason at all,
Except that they happened to be here when Singapore did fall.

Perhaps they too laid on their beds and saw, outside, the tree,
And longed for the afternoon thunderstorm, with hope, just like me.
But they were starving and the nuts would have fed them for a day,
Though I suspect the Japanese guards would have taken them away.

They lay here lonely and hungry, riddled with disease,
I lay here content and happy, leading a life of ease.
Who were the people in this jail? Now they're only bones.
Private Smith, Corporal Brown and Sergeant Major Jones?

They came from East Anglia, a fair land far away,
And hoped, with God's help, they'd return there some day.
But many, many remained here, in mass, unmarked tomb.
Do their ghosts walk these balconies and still dream of home?

I shall enjoy my tour of duty, under the tropical sun,
And return to my beloved East Anglia, when that tour is done.
But many of our brave countrymen will stay here for all time,
And we must not forget they died here, for freedom, yours and mine.